

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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ACDA-05 SAJ-01 (ISO) W

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R 141522Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4162

INFO AMEMBUSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE STOCKHOLM 1229

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, SW

SUBJECT: SWEDISH LEFT COMMUNIST PARTY ELECTS NEW CHAIRMAN

REF: STOCKHOLM 4940

1. LARS WERNER WAS ELECTED NEW PARTY CHAIRMAN OF SWEDISH LEFT COMMUNIST PARTY (VPK) AT THE PARTY'S 24TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE MARCH 13. WERNER RECEIVED 162 VOTES TO 74 FOR HIS CPEF OPPONENT, ROLF HAGEL OF GOTHENBURG, CANDIDATE OF REPUTEDLY "STALINIST" FACTION. WERNER WAS FORMERLY PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN UNDER CARL-HENRIK HERMANSSON, WHO STEPPED DOWN AT CONGRESS AFTER ALMOST 11 YEARS IN OFFICE.

2. CONVENTION WAS MARKED BY CONTINUED INFIGHTING BETWEEN STALINIST, OLD-LINE, WORKER-ORIENTED DELEGATES GENEJLLY CENTERED IN NORBOTTEN (NORTHERN SWEDEN AREA), AND "REFORMIST" YOUTH AND INTELLECTUALLY-ORIENTED FACTION, WHICH IS CENTERED IN STOCKHOLM. CONTINUED CONTROL BY LATTER SEEMS ASSURED WITH ELECTION OF WERNER AND REMOVAL

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FROM OFFICE OF 8 MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVSCOMMITTEE WHO WERE

IDENTIFIED WITH NORBOTTEN FACTION. HOWEVER, VICTORY MAY BE A COSTLY ONE, SINCE INFIGHTING AT THE CONGRESS HAS DEMONSTRATED DEEP DIVISIONS WITHIN PARTY. SHOULD THE NORBOTTEN FACTION LEAVE THE PARTY OR REFUSE TO SUPPORT WERNER'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND CANDIDATES, THE PARTY WOULD LOSE AREA WHERE IT RECEIVED ITS HIGHEST CONCENTRATION (13 PERCENT) OF TOTAL VOTES IN LAST ELECTION. HOWEVER, SINCE THIS WOULD PLACE PARTY IN DANGER OF FALLING BELOW 4 PERCENT OF TOTAL VOTE REQUIRED TO KEEP REPRESENTATION IN RIKSDAG, PARTY LEADERSHIP WILL UNDOUBTEDLY EXERT EVERY EFFORT TO AVOID FORMAL SPLIT.

3. WERNER'S BACKGROUND AND SUPPORT BASE IN SOUTHERN SWEDEN SEEM TO PRESAGE A DIFFICULT TRANSITION TIME, ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS NORBOTTEN FACTION. HE WAS BORN IN 1935 IN FREDHALL, SWEDEN, A TRADITIONALLY "RED" AREA. RAISED BY HIS FATHER TO BE A COMMUNIST, HE JOINED THE PARTY AT THE AGE OF 17. HE RECEIVED CERTIFICATES AS A BRICKLAYER AND CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, AND WAS ACTIVE FROM THE AGE OF 20 IN THE BUILDING WORKERS UNION. WERNER WAS ONE OF THE FIRST YOUNG SWEDISH COMMUNISTS TO CALL FOR "DESTALINIZATION," AND ACTIVELY SUPPORTED HERMANSSON'S BID FOR POWER IN 1964 AGAINST HILDING HAGBERG OF NORBOTTEN. HE WAS ELECTED PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN IN 1967. IN FIRST SPEECH AS VICE CHAIRMAN, WERNER STRESSED THEME FREQUENTLY EXPOUNDED BY HERMANSSON THAT PARTY LINE MUST BE FOLLOWED AND PARTY UNITY ACHIEVED.

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